

## **4.14 RECREATION**

The existing EPNG pipeline crosses several areas used for recreation and conservation. This section addresses potential impacts on recreational opportunities within the vicinity of the Project.

### **4.14.1 Environmental Setting**

The pipeline traverses mainly remote desert areas; as such, the primary recreation activities are classified as casual or dispersed. Much of the land available for casual and dispersed recreation in the Project area is administered by the BLM. Recreational activities include photography, off-road vehicle use, hiking, picnicking, birdwatching, rock climbing, primitive camping, nature study, and general sight seeing. Off-road vehicle use accounts for the greatest single recreational use of public lands in the Project area.

At the California-Arizona border, the Colorado River offers water-based recreational opportunities such as fishing, pleasure boating, sightseeing, swimming, and sun bathing.

The pipeline route crosses the Colorado River near MP 302. The pipeline crossing is underground at this location and should not affect recreational activities. The nearest construction areas to the Colorado River crossing are MP 302.68 and MP 303.50.

The pipeline also crosses the Colorado River Aqueduct near MP 257. In addition, the pipeline borders the northeastern boundary of a designated public water reserve south of the Priests well near MP 263.2. EPNG does not plan any construction locations in the vicinity of these waterbodies.

### **California Desert Conservation Area**

The existing pipeline lies within the CDCA boundary. The CDCA is a 25-million acre area located in southeastern California. Over 12 million acres are managed by the BLM. Pursuant to the FLPMA, the BLM prepared a comprehensive land use management plan for the area (the CDCA Plan) in 1980. The intent of the CDCA Plan is to "... provide for the immediate and future protection and administration of the public lands in the California Desert within the framework of a program of multiple-use and

sustained yield, and the maintenance of environmental quality” (BLM 1980 (as amended)). The CDCA attracts millions of visitors annually due to its wide spectrum of recreational opportunities. Its diverse landscapes create a variety of physical and psychological settings which provide a “desert experience” of natural beauty, solitude, and freedom from the structure and regulations of the urban areas of southern California, where 85 percent of the visitors live (BLM 1980 (as amended)).

Under the Energy Production and Utility Corridors Element of the CDCA Plan, 16 planning corridors were identified to accommodate utility facilities, including all pipeline with diameters greater than 12 inches (BLM 1980 (as amended)). A majority of the Project is within lands designated as Energy Production and Utility Corridors from Mojave (MP 56.07) to Amboy (MP 202.70).

### **Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas**

Wilderness is an area of undeveloped federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least 5000 acres of land or its of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition, and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. Wilderness is protected and managed to preserve its natural conditions. Three wilderness areas are within 0.25 mile of the pipeline route. Table 14.14-1 describes the three areas and the associated pipeline route.

**Table 14.14-1. Wilderness Areas**

<b>Wilderness Name</b>	<b>Milepost Begin</b>	<b>Milepost End</b>	<b>Proximity to Project</b>
Cadiz Dunes Wilderness	222.5	228	Pipeline parallels wilderness boundary
Old Woman Mountains Wilderness	229.5	238	Pipeline parallels wilderness boundary
Palen/McCoy Wilderness	265	290 (approx.)	Pipeline parallels wilderness boundary

Recreation activities within the wilderness areas include backpacking; primitive, unimproved site camping; hiking; horseback riding; nature study and observation; photography and painting; rockclimbing; spelunking; and rockhounding.

A proposed road crossing and pipeline replacement at MP 265.58 lies within 0.50 mile of the Palen/McCoy Wilderness. Access to the area would not be restricted by pipeline construction.

### **Wild and Scenic Rivers**

No Wild and Scenic Rivers have been identified in the Project area.

### **National Trails System**

The existing pipeline route traverses an area near the Pacific Crest Scenic Trail, at MP 44, north of Oak Creek Road near Cameron Road. A hydrostatic test cut-in is proposed for the MP 44 location; however, no work would be conducted adjacent to the trail.

### **California Desert Conservation Area**

The existing pipeline lies within the CDCA boundary. The BLM has developed guidelines to ensure the conservation of land and wildlife within the CDCA. A majority of the Project is within lands designated as Energy Production and Utility Corridors from Mojave (MP 56.07) to Amboy (MP 202.70).

### **Recreation Areas**

The Midland Long-Term Visitor Area (MLTVA), a recreational vehicle campsite maintained by the BLM, lies between MP 277.0 and MP 293.0. Recreational vehicle use of this area requires a permit from September 15 to April 15. Five construction locations are within the designated recreation use area: MP 279.1, MP 279.47, MP 280.60, MP 285.00, and MP 286.30. Access to these construction locations would be along the existing ROW; therefore, no new access roads would be required.

## **Off-Road Vehicle Use Areas**

Conflicts within the CDCA have arisen between those who use vehicles for access and those who use vehicles for recreation. Most CDCA visitors travel some of the time on its network of maintained gravel and dirt roads, ways, trails, and accessible desert washes.

The CDCA has 15,000 miles of paved and maintained roads, 21,000 miles of unmaintained dirt roads, and 7,000 miles of vehicle-accessible washes. However, these routes are not evenly distributed, and desert topography and vegetation do not prevent, and sometimes encourage, cross-country travel in motorized vehicles. Desert soils and vegetation retain the marks of this kind of travel for many years, except in a few places where occasional rains, windstorms, and flash floods erase them. Thus, one vehicle traveling cross-country can create a new route of travel. The proliferation of roads and trails in the CDCA has resulted in a serious problem in some areas and provides the most difficult management issue for BLM (BLM 1980 (as amended)).

The Motorized-Vehicle Access Element of the CDCA Plan has designated areas for appropriate vehicle access. All public land in the California Desert is designated “open”, “closed”, or “limited” for vehicle use. The majority of the Project is within areas designated as limited. “Limited” vehicle access means that motorized-vehicle access is allowed only on certain “routes of travel”, including roads, ways, trails, and washes. At a minimum, use would be restricted to existing routes of travel. Closed areas within the Project vicinity include the three Wilderness Areas in Table 14.14-1. One “open area”, the Ehrenberg Sandbowl Off-Highway Vehicle Area, is located immediately east of two pipeline construction locations (MP 303.40 and MP 303.50). The construction sites are not located within the OHV recreational area.

## **Hunting Areas**

Hunting on private, State, and Federal land is governed by the individual landowners, the BLM, and the CDFG and is subject to hunting regulations. Hunting occurs on BLM-managed lands and on the Tejon Ranch along the pipeline ROW in the Tehachapi area. The three construction locations on the Tejon Ranch are located at MP 17.56, MP 22.00, and MP 22.48. ROW negotiations with Tejon Ranch would stipulate either hunting restrictions during construction or construction restrictions during hunting seasons.

### **4.14.2 Regulatory Setting**

#### **Federal**

The BLM manages the 122.5 acres of land that the pipeline traverses within the CDCA. Recreation is specifically addressed in three CDCA Plan Elements: (1) recreation, (2) wilderness, and (3) motorized–vehicle access. The Recreation Element manages recreation use to minimize user conflicts, to provide a safe recreation environmental, and to protect desert resources. The Wilderness Element sets aside public lands that possess wilderness characteristics to be managed to provide for generally lower-intensity, carefully controlled multiple use of resources, while ensuring that sensitive values are not significantly diminished. The Motorized-Vehicle Access Element provides a system and set of rules governing access to the CDCA by motor vehicles.

The Department of Defense has authority over the 3.6 miles of land at Edwards Air Force Base crossed by the pipeline. Because Edwards is a military installation, this land would not be available for civilian recreational opportunities.

#### **State**

The CSLC has jurisdiction over the 7.05 miles of State School and Sovereign, is traversed by the pipeline, and is the CEQA Lead Agency.

#### **Local**

County general plans, zoning ordinances, and specific plans address recreation resources that may be affected by this Project. In Kern County, the pipeline traverses land addressed in the 2000 Kern County General Plan, the 1984 Boron Specific Plan, and the 1984 Stallion Springs/Phase II Horsethief Flats Specific Plan. In San Bernardino County, recreation is addressed by the 1989 San Bernardino County General Plan. The 2003 Riverside County General Plan and the 1992 Horsethief Canyon Specific Plan are governing documents in Riverside County. In La Paz County, the 1996 La Paz County Zoning Regulation addresses recreation in the Town of Ehrenberg. The 1997 Barstow General Plan addresses recreation in the City of Barstow. Finally, the 1988 Blythe General Plan is the governing document in the City of Blythe.

### **4.14.3 Significance Criteria**

An adverse impact on recreation or special use areas was considered significant and would require mitigation if Project construction or operation would:

- prevent access to an established recreation area during its peak use periods or for more than 1 year ;
- adversely affect areas of special recreational concern (such as a wilderness area or wilderness study area);
- provide or enable access to previously inaccessible, environmentally sensitive areas;
- permanent alteration of a recreation resource (e.g., use of recreation lands or waters, disturbance to unique vegetation, habitat or outstanding landscape characteristics);
- reductions in the quality of the recreation experience for more than one visitor use season (such as from increased noise and dust, reduced visual quality from landscape modifications and night illumination, reduced visibility, and reduced water quality);
- increased use of existing neighborhood and regional parks, resulting in physical deterioration; or
- substantial adverse physical effects from construction of new or altered recreational facilities.

### **4.14.4 Impact Analysis and Mitigation**

During construction, disturbances such as traffic, noise, and dust may affect the quality of some users' recreational experiences, but any effect would be temporary lasting a maximum of 18 weeks. EPNG would use dust minimization techniques along the construction ROW for air quality concerns (Dust Control Plan, Mitigation AIR-1c) and would remove all litter and debris daily from the construction worksite for biological

concerns. Following construction, EPNG would return all disturbed areas to their pre-construction condition according to the UECRM Plan (Appendix D1).

The Project would not limit access to special use and recreational areas during either Project construction or operation.

**Impact REC–1. Noise Effects on Wilderness Areas.**

*Construction noise may elevate noise levels in Wilderness Areas (Potentially Significant, Class II).*

Noise from construction vehicles and construction activities could be perceptible in the nearby areas of Cadiz, Old Woman and Palen/McCoy Wilderness areas. The noise levels could degrade the quality of the recreational experience.

**MM REC–1. Construction timing.** *EPNG would coordinate with BLM to identify low-visitor use periods and would schedule construction activities within those time periods. EPNG would also limit construction activities to week days in the vicinity of the wilderness areas.*

**Rationale for Mitigation.** Mitigation measure REC–1 would reduce the potential impact to recreation experience within Cadiz, Old Woman, and Palen/McCoy Wilderness areas by avoiding construction during high visitor use periods.

**Impact REC–2. Temporary Increase in Cross-Country Offroad Use.**

*Construction personnel may adversely affect restricted use areas (Potentially Significant, Class II).*

Although the Project would not increase accessibility into previously restricted, or inaccessible areas, the presence of construction workers in desert areas could result in an increase of cross-country offroad vehicle use. Due to the sensitivity of the desert environment, any offroad vehicle use not in designated “open areas” can result in significant long-term impacts. EPNG also discourages vehicle use on its existing rights-of-way due to safety considerations and the need to maintain erosion control, promote continued restoration and revegetation success, and protect biological and cultural resources unless the offroad vehicle use is specifically designated or authorized by the

landowner or land management agency. As described in EPNG's UECRM Plan the following measures would be implemented to control unauthorized or undesired offroad vehicle use.

- EPNG would maintain existing access controls such as replacement of gates and earthen berms where specified;
- EPNG would restore the construction and permanent right-of-way to or near the original contours, including restoring streams and washes, removing temporary equipment bridges, installing slope breakers for erosion control, and revegetation; and
- EPNG would install other offroad vehicle controls (e.g., signs, fences, berms, boulders) where designated by BLM to further meet management objectives for offroad vehicle use.

In addition, to minimize potential for offroad vehicle use by construction workers, the following mitigation measure is recommended.

***MM REC–2. Restrict Use.*** *EPNG would restrict vehicle use during construction to its existing ROW, existing access roads, or existing patrol roads that parallel the ROW.*

*ROW negotiations with Tejon Ranch would stipulate either hunting restrictions during construction or construction restrictions during hunting seasons.*

Mitigation measure REC–2 ensures that construction workers are prohibited from off road vehicle use and hunting except in designated areas thereby minimizing potential long-term impacts on the desert environment.

Table 4.14-2 presents a summary of impacts on recreation and recommended mitigation measures.



**Table 4.14-2. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures for Recreation**

Impact	Mitigation Measure
<b>REC-1:</b> Potential to Temporarily Disturb Recreational Activities	<b>REC-1.</b> Construction Schedule
<b>REC-2:</b> Potential to Temporarily Increase Off-road Vehicle Use	<b>REC-2.</b> Restrict Use

#### 4.14.5 Cumulative Impacts

The construction of other projects in the vicinity of the proposed Project could cumulatively affect recreational resources if the construction activities occurred simultaneously. Section 5.5, Summary of Cumulative Impacts, discusses projects near the proposed Project that could contribute to cumulative impacts. The majority of these projects are located on the western portion of the Project, where construction activities would be limited to small repairs and replacements that are spread out over a large area. Construction activities in these areas would not involve extensive disturbance or time. The only major construction area, the Cadiz interconnect, is near an approved project called the Cadiz Groundwater Storage and Dry-Year Supply Program. Although unlikely, it is possible that the groundwater project could be built at the same time as the interconnect. Additionally, both the Cadiz interconnect and the Cadiz groundwater project are near the CDCA and a few miles away from the Cadiz Dune Wilderness area. Construction activities associated with both projects being constructed at the same time could affect air quality and noise levels in these recreation areas. Such impacts would be temporary in nature for both projects. With implementation of the MM REC 1 and MM REC 2 cumulative impacts on recreational resources in the vicinity of the proposed Project would be less than significant.

#### 4.14.6 Alternatives

##### No Project Alternative

The No Project Alternative would not convert the former All American crude oil pipeline system to a natural gas transmission system. Potential recreation impacts associated

with the construction of the Project would not occur. Existing operations of the All American crude oil pipeline would not result in recreation impacts.

### **Ehrenberg to Daggett Alternative**

The Ehrenberg to Daggett Alternative would not convert the portion of Line 1903 from MP 0 to MP 132.1. The potential for impacts to Cadiz, Old Woman and Palen/McCoy Wilderness area would remain the same. The potential for unauthorized offroad vehicle use during the construction phased of the Project from MP 0 to MP 132.1 would be eliminated. No potentially significant impacts on recreation are associated with this alternative or the proposed Project.

### **Ehrenberg to Cadiz Alternative**

The Ehrenberg to Cadiz Alternative would not convert the portion of Line 1903 from MP 0 to MP 215.75. The potential for impacts to Cadiz, Old Woman and Palen/McCoy Wilderness area would remain the same. The potential for unauthorized offroad vehicle use during the construction phased of the Project from MP 0 to MP 215.75 would be eliminated. No potentially significant impacts on recreation are associated with this alternative or the proposed Project.

#### **4.14.7 References**

City of Bakersfield, California. November 2003. Found at [www.ci.bakersfield.ca.us](http://www.ci.bakersfield.ca.us)

City of Barstow, California. November 2003. Found at [www.ci.barstow.ca.us](http://www.ci.barstow.ca.us)

City of Blythe, California. November 2003. Found at [www.ci.blythe.ca.us](http://www.ci.blythe.ca.us)

Kern County, California. November 2003. Found at [www.co.kern.ca.us](http://www.co.kern.ca.us)

La Paz County, California. November 2003. Found at [www.co.la-paz.az.us](http://www.co.la-paz.az.us)

Riverside County, California. November 2003. Found at [www.co.riverside.ca.us](http://www.co.riverside.ca.us)

San Bernardino County, California. November 2003. Found at [www.co.san-bernardino.ca.us](http://www.co.san-bernardino.ca.us)

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, March 1999. The California Desert Conservation Area Plan 1980 as amended.